



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Grand Canyon News Release

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Grand Canyon National Park working on coordinated effort to prevent quagga mussels in Colorado River

(Grand Canyon, Ariz.) - Quagga mussels, a type of invasive mussel commonly referred to as zebra mussels, have moved to the western United States, and Grand Canyon National Park is working with other agencies and land managers to contain the spread of this invasive species. The first report of the quagga mussel west of the Rocky Mountains was from Lake Mead National Recreation Area, downstream of the Grand Canyon, on January 6, 2007. Quagga mussels were discovered in the Boulder Basin area of Lake Mead, on an intake tower and spillway structure at Hoover Dam, downstream of the dam at Katherine Landing, and in Lake Havasu. Currently, Lake Powell and the Colorado River as it runs through Grand Canyon are believed to be free of mussels. However, quagga mussels pose a major threat to the Canyon if they are introduced.

Joe Alston, Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent said, "Since quagga mussels were discovered in the western portion of Lake Mead, we have been working with many parties to develop procedures to prevent entry of the invasive mussels into Grand Canyon National Park. We expect to complete agreements on procedures by the end of February, before the intensive boating season in Grand Canyon. We are fortunate that the infestation to date appears to have not yet reached the eastern portion of Lake Mead, but because of the close proximity and potential for spread, we will be aggressive in our approach to prevent quagga mussels from entering the Colorado River in Grand Canyon.

Zebra and quagga mussels are normally spread by attaching themselves to boats, which are launched in one lake and then later moved into a different lake. Both quagga and zebra mussels are microscopic in juvenile life stages, making them impossible to detect based solely on a visual inspection.

In waters where they exist, quagga mussels commonly multiply into the billions. They filter tiny pieces of organic matter and plankton out of the water. Each individual mussel can filter about one quart of water each day, so that a large population of quagga mussels can consume the food that should support the natural food chain in an aquatic system. This and other body functions of quagga mussels typically result in serious adverse effects to native aquatic life.

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Park staff is working with staff's from Lake Mead NRA, Glen Canyon NRA, USGS, USFWS and Arizona Game and Fish in an effort to coordinate a response to contain the spread of the quagga mussel. River users and recreational fisherman are the most likely vectors for moving the invasive mussel into the Colorado River in Grand Canyon through river rafts and gear used in infested areas.

Currently, visitors can help keep Grand Canyon free of invasive mussels by:

When taking your equipment out of the water:

- Drain the water from your motor, live well, and bilge on land *before* leaving the immediate area of the lake.
- Completely inspect your vessel and trailer, removing any visible mussels, but also feel for any rough or gritty spots on the hull. These may be young mussels that can be hard to see.

Before driving out of the local community:

- Flush the motor and bilges with hot, soapy water or a 5% solution of household bleach.
- Wash the hull, equipment, bilge and any other exposed surface with hot, soapy water or use a 5% solution of household bleach.
- Clean and wash your trailer, truck or any other equipment that comes in contact with lake water. Mussels can live in small pockets anywhere water collects.

When you return home:

- Air-dry the boat and other equipment for at least five days before launching in any other waterway.
- Do not reuse bait once it has been in the water and allow all fishing tackle to air dry for 5 days before fishing in other lakes and streams.

Visit www.100thmeridian.org to find out more information about quagga mussels.

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